

## **speaking of coal....**

### **Environmentalists up in arms over coal plant**

Melinda Williams, Staff Writer

**BOUNTIFUL** - Bountiful City is considering signing a long-term contract to purchase power from a third coal-burning plant near Delta, but environmentalists say the plan will spew seven million additional tons of chemicals into the air annually.

The proposed plant, if built, will be the third operated by Intermountain Power Agency, of which Bountiful and 22 other municipalities own a portion. Bountiful has been getting its power through the agency for about 20 years, according to city manager Tom Hardy, who said the city would be a minor participant, receiving about 10 of the 900 megawatts the facility would produce.

Construction of the plant is now pending an appeal by the Sierra Club and the Grand Canyon Trust to the Utah Air Quality Board to overturn a permit already granted to IPP. The two groups initially filed the appeal in 2005, but the state board rejected it. The environmentalists then took it to the state Supreme Court, which ruled in their favor last year.

Attorneys for the state and the two environmental groups are expected to meet this week to set a timeline to resolve the appeal.

Citizen groups have now stepped forward to speak out on their concerns. At a meeting held last Thursday night at the Centerville Branch Library about 50 people attended to hear from Tim Wagner, with the Utah Smart Energy Campaign, Utah Sierra Club, and Gerald H. Ross, a physician and internationally known expert on environmental influences on human health, now living in Bountiful.

Wagner told the gathering that Utah currently gets 95 percent of its power from coal, but as the effects of global warming are becoming more well known, people are becoming more and more conscious of energy options, such as wind and solar power.

Ross, whose background is in family and environmental medicine, said the inversion which socked in the Wasatch Front last week, "is flat unhealthy, and to think of adding more pollutants to the air does not make sense to me."

Both men advocated the use of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. Wagner spoke of how farmers in the Midwest are paid to have windmills in their cornfields, which even on the calmest days, still manage to produce energy. And, he said, in Utah, with an average of 300 days of sunshine annually, solar energy would be virtually inexhaustible. He also said that geothermal energy has huge potential in Utah.

Hardy, in an earlier interview said city officials understand the concerns about pollution. However, he said the proposed plant would be the cleanest coal-fired plant, built with the best pollution control technology. And, he said, “there are no other reliable power plant operations options out there right now.”

Currently, he said, wind power has a 30 percent load factor, meaning residents can count on it about 30 percent of the time. “When people turn on a light, they need their lights to come on. We can’t say ‘sorry, the wind isn’t blowing.’”

He said geothermal energy is more reliable, but is harder to get.

And, he said, the city uses some hydroelectric power. “We would love to get more, but it’s difficult to get permission, as it comes from stream beds which environmental groups are against.

He said that while nuclear energy has the least environmental impact, “it’s a huge concern with what you do with used fuel rods.”

As to the proposed IPP plant, “it is the best available, least harmful unit being proposed.” He noted that IPP was originally going to build four power units, but 20 years after IPP began, they’re only now building the third unit.

Hardy said. the city’s electrical load use is growing by 2 percent, while the population is growing by 1 percent, due to bigger homes and more electronically driven technology. “We need to find additional sources for energy. We’ll be glad to look at a better option.”

[mwilliams@davisclipper.com](mailto:mwilliams@davisclipper.com)

[sryther@davisclipper.com](mailto:sryther@davisclipper.com)